



# County of Los Angeles CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICE

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March 24, 2016

To: Supervisor Hilda L. Solis, Chair  
Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas  
Supervisor Sheila Kuehl  
Supervisor Don Knabe  
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

From: Sachi A. Hamai  
Chief Executive Officer

## SACRAMENTO UPDATE

### Executive Summary

This memorandum contains a report on the following:

- **Pursuit of County Position on Legislation. SB 1053 (Leno)**, which as introduced on February 16, 2016, would amend the definition of "source of income" to include specified Federal, State, or local housing assistance or subsidies paid either to a tenant or landlord on behalf of a tenant. Therefore, unless otherwise directed by the Board, consistent with existing policy to support legislation that addresses and combats discrimination based on age, disability, disease status, gender identity, language, immigration status, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or other protected characteristics; and policy to support proposals to increase efforts to reduce homelessness for veterans and their families, increase affordable housing, mental health services, including treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury, substance abuse treatment, training, placement and employment opportunities, and provide other essential assistance to those who have honorably served in our armed forces, **the Sacramento advocates will support SB 1053.**

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*"To Enrich Lives Through Effective And Caring Service"*

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### **Pursuit of County Position on Legislation**

**SB 1053 (Leno)**, which as introduced on February 16, 2016, would amend the definition of “source of income” to also include specified Federal, State, or local housing assistance or subsidies paid either to the tenant or directly to the landlord on behalf of the tenant.

Existing law generally prohibits housing discrimination with respect to various personal characteristics including source of income. Existing law defines “source of income” for these purposes as lawful, verifiable income paid directly to a tenant, or paid to a representative of a tenant, which does not include a landlord.

According to the author’s office, SB 1053 would amend the law to clarify that housing subsidy vouchers, including but not limited to Section 8 housing assistance vouchers (also known as Housing Choice Vouchers), are a protected source of income. This would prohibit landlords from denying individuals and families from applying for rentals or evicting them based solely on the fact that they receive a Section 8 voucher.

The Housing Authority of the County of Los Angeles (HACoLA) reports that SB 1053 would have a significant impact on its approximately 24,000 voucher holders, and may ultimately improve the effectiveness of the Housing Choice Voucher Program in placing low-income participants in safe, sanitary, and affordable housing. HACoLA indicates that Los Angeles is home to one of the most unaffordable rental markets in the nation. The high rents, coupled with a 3 percent vacancy rate of available units, leave renters with very few viable options when looking for private rentals. This problem is further compounded for families who receive rental assistance because many property owners do not wish to participate in subsidized rental assistance programs and employ a “No Section 8” practice, which limits participants from even applying for rental housing and denies voucher holders access, based on their source of income, without being given due consideration.

The Housing Authority of the County of Los Angeles reports that in 2015 alone, approximately half of the 7,100 voucher holder extension requests received by HACoLA cited issues with locating affordable units in their desired area as a barrier to utilizing their voucher. Of this group, over 1,200 families specifically cited that they were unable to locate a property owner who was willing to accept their voucher. HACoLA indicates that SB 1053 would eliminate the “No Section 8” practice and support existing State and Federal fair housing policies, which are in place to ensure equitable access and consideration of all applicants.

The Housing Authority of the County of Los Angeles also indicates that if adopted, SB 1053 would effectively increase the pool of available rental units in the region and will also allow the agency to forecast, and ultimately achieve its voucher utilization goals and not have the participants unable to find suitable housing. Such cases often result in further administrative work to process voucher extensions, and risk participants becoming frustrated with their inability to find available units and request to transfer their vouchers to other jurisdictions.

The Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMVA) reports that SB 1053 would help ensure that landlords do not deny low-income veterans housing based solely on the fact that they receive Federal, State, or local housing assistance or subsidies. DMVA is currently working to establish a Countywide Veterans Benefits Advocacy Program for veterans experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness. DMVA indicates that the bill would complement this program by providing the Department additional opportunities to secure housing for veterans who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

The Chief Executive Office's (CEO) County Homeless Initiative Branch reports that SB 1053 will help prevent and reduce homelessness by ensuring that families and individuals with a Housing Choice Voucher have the same opportunity to secure housing as those with other sources of income. Additionally, the CEO's County Homeless Initiative Branch indicates that, with the adoption of SB 1053, housing stock accessible to families and individuals with Housing Choice Vouchers will increase, as will the opportunity to choose a location where they feel safe and secure.

This office, the Housing Authority of the County of Los Angeles, the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, and the CEO's County Homeless Initiative Branch support SB 1053. Therefore, unless otherwise directed by the Board, consistent with existing policy to support legislation that addresses and combats discrimination based on age, disability, disease status, gender identity, language, immigration status, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or other protected characteristics, and to support proposals to increase efforts to reduce homelessness for veterans and their families, increase affordable housing, mental health services, including treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury, substance abuse treatment, training, placement and employment opportunities, and provide other essential assistance to those who have honorably served in our armed forces, **the Sacramento advocates will support SB 1053.**

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SB 1053 is sponsored by the Western Center on Law and Poverty and the Non-Profit Housing Association of Northern California, and is supported by the National Housing Law Project, Public Advocates, and Tenants Together. There is no registered opposition on file.

SB 1053 is scheduled to be heard in the Senate Judiciary Committee on March 29, 2016.

We will continue to keep you advised.

SAH:JJ:MR  
AO:ma

c: All Department Heads  
Legislative Strategist  
Local 721  
Coalition of County Unions  
California Contract Cities Association  
Independent Cities Association  
League of California Cities  
City Managers Associations  
Buddy Program Participants